etc. In Addition, facility of single window clearance is available to other specified categories of importers.

The Department continually undertakes review of the import and export procedures. Improvements are discussed in the Tariff and General Conferences of Commissioners of Customs regularly. No time limits are fixed for such exercises.

Export of Cotton

4383. SHRI SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) whether increase in export of cotton has come as a ride sheck to the textile industry; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government to ansure that there is sufficient quantity of cotton in the country to meet the need of textiles industry ?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA) : (a) and (b) During the current cotton season 1996-97, in view, of prospects of another good cotton crop similar to last year, there is no shortage of cotton. Before allowing export of cotton, the Government had taken into consideration all relevant factors, including estimates of production, availability, likely consumption by the mills, small spinners and non-mill sector, likely surplus, price trands, etc.

Import of Gold

4384. SHRI I.D. SWAMI : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Enforcement Directorate has found gross irregularities in the import of gold;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the gold imported under the concession scheme was diverted to jewallery exporters who in turn are alleged to have violated the gold import scheme; and

(d) if so, the details of jewellery exporters who have violated the gold import scheme and the action Government have taken against them ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (c) There have been no irregularities in the import of gold by the nominated agencies for supply to the exporters of gold jewellery under the schemes of Exim Policy. However, irregularities in export of gold jewellery by certain exporters have been detected by various investigating agencies including the Enforcement Directorate. These irregularities include :

(i) Non-export of gold jewellery against gold loaned/ sold by MMTC;

(ii) Shortage in weight of gold jewellery in export consignments detected abroad;

(iii) Quality of gold jewellery not upto the mark;

(iv) Tampering of airway bills;

(v) Collection of export percels/its payments abroad by EOU/DTA associates of MMTC;

(vi) Non-realisation of export proceeds within prescribed time limit.

(d) 23 cases of alleged irregularities have been referred by MMTC to various investigating agencies including CBI, DRI, Enforcement Directorate and DGFT for investigation and necessary action. Enforcement Directorate are investigating 15 such cases.

Borjhar Airport, Guwahati

4385. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether a proposal for declaration of Borjhar Airport at Guwahati as custom airport was turned down by his Ministry;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether a special package programme for North-Eastern region has been declared by the Prime Minister during his visit to the region recently;

(d) if so, whether the above matter is being reviewed;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The proposal to declare Borjhar Airport at Guwahati as a Customs Airport was examind in the past found to be premature since the airport lacked necessary infrastructural facilities. Besides, the projected scale of operations was found to be commercially unviable.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) to (f) The special package programme announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister includes upgrading Guwahati Airport as the hub centre for the North-East and developing it as an international airport. This is expected to be implemented by the end of the 9th Five Year Plan.